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Housekeepers' Chat

Tuesday, December 3, 1939

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "The Christmas Fruit Cake." Recipe from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes."

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"Aunt Sammy," said Uncle Ebenezer this morning, "what is that queer-looking package on the top shelf of the linen closet?"

"Your Christmas present, Uncle Ebenezer, and I'll thank you not to go punching holes through the wrapping paper, to see what's inside."

"Would you mind giving me a subtle hint as to what you have bought for me?"

"Not a bit. It is not a dog, nor a Persian cat, nor a red geranium. Nothing to eat, nothing to wear, nothing even remotely connected with smoking, nothing 'for the home.'"

"Egad!" said Uncle Ebenezer. "There's nothing left but a saxophone, and you know I can't use that, Aunt Sammy."

"It is not a saxophone, and besides, it's not nice to say 'Egad!'"

Sometimes I have to be quite severe with Uncle Ebenezer; he's as inquisitive as Billy, around Christmas time.

Now, if no one objects, we'll turn our attention to the Christmas fruit cake. Not a bit too early to make your cakes for Christmas. My recipe calls for 16 ingredients. It makes between 5 and 6 pounds of cake.

Before I begin reading these 16 ingredients, you'd better lock the front door, muffle the telephone, and give the baby something to play with. No interruptions allowed, at this important time.

Sixteen ingredients, for the Christmas fruit cake:

1 pound raisins	1/2 cup tart jelly
1 pound currants	1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 pound citron	1 cup molasses
1 cup chopped nuts	4 cups flour
1/2 pound butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar	1/2 teaspoon soda
5 eggs	1 tablespoon cinnamon, and
1/2 cup cider	1/2 teaspoon nutmeg



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Let's count the ingredients again; (Repeat).

Before we mix the fruit cake, we must prepare all the fruit and the nuts. Pick the fruit over carefully, wash it, and dry it. May take some time to do this, but it pays. Our goal is a perfect fruit cake, and we can't have a perfect fruit cake unless the fruit is carefully prepared. Cut the citron into very small pieces, and be sure there are no pieces of shell in the nuts.

Now, take your pencils again, and I'll tell you how to mix the cake. (Read slowly).

First, cream the butter and sugar. Next, separate the eggs, and add the beaten yolks to the butter and sugar. Then add the liquid ingredients, that is, the cider, the jelly, the sour cream, and the molasses. Now, divide the flour into two portions. With one-half of the flour sift the salt, the soda, and spices. To the other half of the flour, add the fruit and nuts, and mix thoroughly. Now take the half of the flour which contains the salt, soda, and spices, and add this to the liquid ingredients. Then put in the floured fruit and nuts, using the hand to mix well. And last, fold in the beaten whites of the eggs. Just a word about the fruit. If it is well covered with flour, the fruit will be scattered through the cake as it should be, instead of settling to the bottom.

That's all there is to mixing the cake. You will note that the recipe calls for a half cup of tart jelly. Grape or currant jelly will do nicely. If you have some jelly which is not firm enough to use on the table, you might use it in the cake. And be sure to select a molasses which has a good sweet flavor.

If you want a very rich fruit cake, you can vary this recipe. Add an extra half-pound of raisins, and another cup of nuts. Or, you can use one pound of raisins, as in the original recipe, and add one cup of chopped candied cherries, candied pineapple, dates, or dried figs, and one extra cup of chopped nuts. Good nuts to use in a fruit cake are pecans, English walnuts, blanched almonds, and hickory nuts.

Do you want to bake your fruit cake in one large loaf, or in two or more smaller ones, so that you can perhaps give away a loaf for a Christmas gift? If you want to bake it in one large loaf, choose a large tube pan that will allow the dough to be 3-1/2 to 4 inches deep in the pan. A cake this size will require about 4 hours to bake, at very moderate oven temperature (275° to 300°F.). Fruit cake, you know, always needs to be baked in a moderate oven, because the fruit heats through slowly, and burns easily on sides and top if the oven is too hot.

If you prefer to bake your fruit cake in two smaller tube pans, it will take only about 3 hours at this same moderate oven temperature (275° to 300°F.). Or if you wish, bake your cake in small-sized bread pans. This recipe would make three loaves that size, each one weighing about 2 pounds. The one large loaf will weigh about 6 pounds.

R-H.C. 12/3

No matter what size or shape the pan is, by all means line it with well-greased paper. Sometimes small pieces of the fruit get next to the sides of the pan and stick and burn, unless there is a greased paper lining.

When you think the cake is done, test it in the good old-fashioned way, with a clean straw or a toothpick. If the toothpick comes out dry, the cake is done.

Turn the cake out on a rack to cool as soon as you take it from the oven, and then cold wrap it in waxed paper, or parchment paper, and put it in a tightly covered tin box. Then it will keep until Christmas, and for weeks afterward, if the family give it half a chance. Look at the cake, once in a while, to see that no mold is starting. The Recipe Lady says you can keep the fruit cake moist by putting half an apple in with it, or a piece of cheesecloth dampened with cider.

This cake is delicious without frosting. However, if you want a frosting, don't put it on until just before Christmas day. If you put it on too soon, the frosting will discolor, and crack.

Fruit cakes make appropriate Christmas gifts. Get one of the attractive tin boxes, and bake your gift cake so that it will fit the box.

Here's hoping your cake will be just as good as the one the Recipe Lady made last week. If you think it's even better -- well, of course I can't judge that, without sampling it.

Tomorrow: "Teaching Good Manners Through Play."

